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VACATION GARDEN NOTES



Issued by
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VAN WERT, OHIO

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I usually spend my winter vacations in Florida and I make Stuart on the East Coast my headquarters, for like Joe Jefferson and Grover Cleveland of a former generation, I particularly enjoy the fishing in the St. Lucie River and in the ocean just outside the Inlet. This year, however, after having planned my usual trip south, I suddenly changed my mind and decided to combine business with pleasure and spend my vacation in Paris. This gave me an excellent opportunity to meet the French Iris growers again, and to talk with them without the excitement of a garden full of blooms to distract their attention from the conversation.

You may be surprised to know that although Paris is much farther north than my part of the United States, 41° north latitude, yet its winters are much milder than ours. I found rhododendrons in full bloom on February 25th, and the grass in the parks was nice and green. Forsythias were blooming in early March, and the weather during that month was delightful, very much like our April.

I found Mr. Millet with a force of men at work in his garden, and I was particularly pleased with a pink, or rose colored violet which he has developed. The blooms which I saw were a pure rose color, not only on the face of the petals, but also on the reverse, and the flowers had the delightful violet fragrance. The blooms were not as large and the stems were not as long as on the common violets

but Mr. Millet told me that the size would be increased by selection. He has stock enough on hand to fill orders and he hopes Americans will become interested in his pink (rose color) violets.

He has a big collection of seedling dwarf Irises and he confidently expects to make some valuable additions to the list of dwarfs now in commerce. He enjoys the work in his garden and believes he will yet produce an Iris which will win him more fame than did the now celebrated Madame Gaudichau. He refuses quantity orders on this Iris, for he says he would rather have a thousand customers for small quantities than just a few customers who would be willing to buy in any one season his entire output. I am sorry he would not let me have as many Madame Gaudichau's as I wanted, but I am sure his plan of filling many small orders is the right one for his future success.

I had a delightful visit with Mr. Mottet, who for years has had charge of the Irises for Vilmorins. He is particularly interested in his new Iris, Allies, because it comes nearer being an ever-blooming Iris than any other variety. It has bloomed profusely in autumn during three of the past four seasons, and the one season in which it did not bloom was a very dry one, and Mr. Mottet believes that a moderate application of water that season would have caused it to produce blooms. If I remember correctly, its color is very much like Opera, which I believe to be one of the most desirable Irises now in commerce, and I am sure Allies will get a warm welcome when it is shipped to America.

Mr. Mottet tells me that the report of the International Iris Conference held in Paris last summer, will be published within the next few months, and he believes that many of the Iris enthusiasts in America will be glad to have a copy of it. As I recall the conversation, he told me that it would contain about two hundred and fifty pages, seven by ten inches in size, and that it would have some illustrations. I noticed that there was a list of the best twenty-five Irises, the best fifty Irises and the best one hundred Irises selected by a committee appointed at the Conference. I believe it can be purchased in quantity so that it can be mailed to individuals for about \$1.50 per copy, and it is possible that the American Iris Society may purchase a quantity for distribution among its members at that price. Part of the

report will be in French and part in English. If it were all in English I feel sure that there would be a great demand for it in America, but as a greater portion of it will be in French, I was unable to give Mr. Mottet any idea as to the quantity America would want. If you should be interested in obtaining a copy of the report, it might be well to get in touch with either the President or Secretary of the American Iris Society.

The Vilmorin firm has more good Irises to its credit than any other French grower. The greatest, of course, is Ambassadeur, which is remarkable not only for its beauty, but also for its habit which is the most majestic of any Iris I have ever seen. Its very appearance suggests the thought "majestic" and I am wondering if all the Iris lovers who want it will be able to secure it this season. I tried to buy one hundred roots when I was in Paris last year and Mr. Emerich, the Sales Manager, told me that all orders on this variety must be cut down 75% and I could have only twenty-five roots. I am sincerely glad that I began importing this variety three years ago. It is to be hoped that every Iris Show in the United States will have at least one Ambassadeur on exhibition.

Vilmorin's Magnifica, while not as tall and stately as Ambassadeur, is in its way just as remarkable. It has produced the largest Iris bloom I have ever seen, with the possible exception of Leonato. The color of Magnifica, a peculiarly rich purple, is much deeper than that of Leonato, and its habit is very much like Isoline. The stock of Isoline, by the way, I fear will be rather scarce in America this season, judging from the fact that the Federal Horticultural Board would not allow a single root of it to be imported last year. Its approach to a rose color and its enormous size lead me to believe that every American Iris enthusiast will want to own an Isoline, and after he owns one he will want to make a considerable planting of it, and if I am right in my conclusions there will probably be an insufficient supply to fill orders on this variety. On my order for Medrano and Ballerine, which rank nearly as high as Ambassadeur and Magnifica, I had to be satisfied with only one-fourth as many roots as I wished, and so it is quite probable that these two varieties will also be scarce in America for a season or two.

All Iris lovers should remember the names Drapeau,

Marsouin, Grenadier, Hussard, Spahi, Allies and Chasseur, for these are the names of the extra good varieties originated by Vilmorins which are not yet on the market and which may not be released for several years. I saw them growing at Verrier, near Paris, last June and all of them have merit. The beauty of Chasseur was particularly outstanding, for with the possible exception of Shekinah, it is by all odds the best yellow Iris I saw in my visits to European gardens.

I had a nice visit with Mr. Jacques Vilmorin, the head of the firm, in which I received more first-hand information as to the condition of Europe since the war, than I did from all other sources combined. The Vilmorins are probably the largest seed exporters in the world, selling their products to both North and South America, Australia, Asia and Africa, as well as to every European country. When war was suddenly declared in 1914 they had accounts due them in every country in Europe and of course all future business from those countries was immediately cut off, and their customers had no opportunity to remit to them, even if they had funds and were willing to do so. And so when I asked him if he had any faith in the future of Roumania, he told me that the Vilmorin customers in that country were paying up the interest on their 1914 accounts and were making some payments on the principal and it seemed to him that there was an era of prosperity in the future for Roumania. In like manner I asked his opinion of the future of the various countries into which Europe is now divided, and he could give me a business man's view based upon present business conditions with his own customers in all those lands, and as I talked with him I felt sure that he really knew more than many of the statesmen who air their views through newspapers and magazines. I was particularly interested in his view as to the future of Russia, for in my seven months' trip last year I had met Russian refugees in Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy and France, and everywhere I met them I was impressed with the intelligent expression, erect carriage, and manly bearing of the men from that country. I had made up my mind that any country that could produce such men as the refugees I met, could not help but have have a good future, but Mr. Vilmorin told me with sorrow, that there was as yet no evidence of the good future to which my faith looked forward. But not-

withstanding the darkness of present day Russia, I still have faith in its future, for the refugee of today will not always be a refugee, and in his contact with the world, hard though his individual lot may be, he will absorb some of the necessary wisdom which he will use in helping Russia to its rightful place in the world. Mr. Vilmorin's reports were as a whole encouraging, but he, like every other Frenchman I met, was sure that the vital thing necessary to the prosperity of Europe was that Germany recognize its obligation to France, and show its good faith by meeting this obligation. I look back with pleasure and satisfaction on my visit with the head of the Vilmorin firm.

In a conversation with Mr. Cayeaux, of Cayeaux and Le Clerc, I found that he had probably made more Iris crosses last season than any other man I met, and he was pleased to report that the seed from these 1922 crosses had already germinated and that the plants were then two and three inches high. He will have a world of new varieties to show in 1925, and if the twenty-four hour aereo service, New York to Paris, is then in operation, I am sure that many American Iris enthusiasts will be tempted to visit his garden. Mr. Cayeaux thinks well of Pallida William Marshall, and if it blooms for me this season, it will be interesting to compare it with the three great pallidas, Dalmatica, Clio and Tinea, and give my observations in a future issue of my Garden Notes.

He told me also that all varieties with Ricardi strain in them should be kept dry from November until early spring, for they will not stand continued rains. He believes our northern climate, where the Ricardi Irises can remain frozen for three months, is better for them than the continued winter rains of Paris. I hope American growers will pay particular attention to Ricardi varieties. Mlle. Schwartz is the best one I know and her record has been good the past three years in my garden. My visit with Mr. Cayeaux was most satisfactory, even though his command of English was no greater than my command of French, but he made me understand very plainly that he was delighted to find that there were Americans who were as deeply interested in Irises as he. I will look forward with great pleasure to another visit with him in his garden during the blooming season.

One of the new French firms interested in growing

Irises is Ch. Maron and Sons, located at Brunoy, near Paris, and the specialty of the firm seems to be the new seedlings produced by Mr. Denis. Their garden is not large but they certainly know how to grow the varieties with a Ricardi strain. Mr. Denis can well be proud of his seedlings in their garden. Mlle. Schwartz, as grown by them, was a wonder and attracted universal attention.

This firm packed the roots they shipped differently from any other growers. They evidently allowed the rhizomes to dry thoroughly, after which they wrapped about six roots of each variety in excelsior, then loosely wrapped the excelsior bundle with paper, and finally placed these packages in a shipping case. For long distance shipments I believe their method of packing will prove most satisfactory as the roots they sent me arrived in my garden in perfect condition.

I was very sorry that I had to end my vacation and start home when I did as I learned that Mr. Wallace, the celebrated English Iris grower, would arrive in Paris on the very day on which my ship sailed for America, and I would indeed have enjoyed another visit with him. However, conditions were such that I had to return home and so I missed seeing him this trip. I will look forward with pleasure to meeting him in his own garden at Tunbridge Wells on some of my future vacation trips to Europe. I expect to tell in the next issue of my Garden Notes of my delightful visit at Tunbridge Wells during the blooming season last year.

I believe all experienced Iris growers will agree with me that *Pallida Dalmatica* (Princess Beatrice) is one of the finest Irises in the world, and my observations during the past three years, both in Europe and America, lead me to believe that any improvements to this type of Iris is more likely to come through the addition of the Ricardi strain than in any other manner. Iris growers have known for years that there has been confusion over the real *Pallida Dalmatica* and the delegates to the International Conference last year were instantly made aware of the cause of that confusion, when on one of our trips to the Iris gardens, we found two distinct varieties bearing the name, *Pallida Dalmatica*, and I am sure that one of the good results of the Paris Iris Conference will be the elimination of the inferior variety bearing that name. I am sure also that you will

be glad to know that the tall variety, which was growing thirty to thirty-six inches high in France, and which in more favorable conditions in this country is apt to grow thirty-six to forty-two inches high, was deemed the true variety. Pallida Dalmatica is the one standard variety which should be in every Iris lovers garden for it is the standard by which every other pallida is judged.

I have been using my Garden Notes for the express purpose of telling others the results I find in my own garden. For instance in my Garden Notes Number One, I said that Peony Miss Salway, as grown in my garden, was not good enough to offer at even \$1.00, which was a true statement. But as a result of the publication of that statement I found out that the importer from whom I have purchased Miss Salway did not have the true variety, and so in Garden Notes Number Four I stated that fact, so that prospective purchasers could be on their guard in buying this variety. I stated also, in the same issue of my Garden Notes, that after seeing the true variety, I believed that Miss Salway should be rated in a class with Lady Alexandra Duff and Phyllis Kelway.

In like manner I have told of the merits and faults of many Peonies and Irises as I have found them in my own and other gardens, and I am hoping that beginners have found some help from my observations. Every once and a while some kind hearted person writes, commending me for my enthusiasm in publishing my Garden Notes, and then, because I am human, I feel a sense of gratification, but when my printer presents his bill, I am sometimes tempted to doubt the wisdom of publishing them.

As the Post Office Department strongly advises that all mailing lists be revised at least once a year, it is quite probable that the next issue of these Garden Notes will be accompanied with a request for your renewal or discontinuance. As a result of your replies I can probably tell whether or not you wish me to continue the publication of the Garden Notes. I hope that as you read them you can see that their preparation is a pleasure to me, but if they are not performing a useful service to those to whom they are sent, then their publication is a mistake. I hope you will be interested enough to watch for the enclosure in the next number, on which you will be asked to let me know whether you wish me to continue your name on my mailing list.

I often receive letters asking permission to use some of my Garden Notes, either as a whole or in part for other publications and I am always glad to allow their use by anyone interested. However, as the opinions expressed in these Notes are based upon my own observations of flowers under conditions as they exist in my garden each year, and as the conditions change, my later observations may be made from an entirely different angle, and the quotation of a statement made at one time may be an injustice to my opinion as expressed later under different conditions.

So, if any of my readers anticipate using any part of these Notes for publication I would appreciate it, if they would consult me in advance so that I may give them the latest thought I have published upon the matter in which they are interested.